

Lighting the Way: Afrofuturist Approaches to Nutrition Equity Through Traffic Light Labeling

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Project Overview

Lighting the Way is a student-led public health dissemination campaign to transform nutrition behaviors through culturally responsive, accessible tools. The campaign builds on research findings from a campus intervention at Cal Poly Pomona that demonstrated the potential of a Traffic Light Food Labeling System to improve students' dietary habits. By categorizing food items as green (encouraged), yellow (moderate), or red (limit), the system simplifies nutrition guidance and empowers students, particularly those experiencing food insecurity, to make informed choices in real time.

Although the intervention yielded promising results in the experimental group, its reach has not yet extended to the general student body. This project launches a broader dissemination effort, increasing awareness, educating peers about the labeling system, and building student advocacy to shift pantry offerings toward more green and yellow (nutrient-dense) items.

Collaborators and Community Impact

This project is being carried out in collaboration with Dr. Fatheema Subhan, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Nutrition and Food Science, whose expertise in implementing user-friendly nutrition systems has guided the campaign's educational approach. It also benefits from the partnership of Sandy Solano, Director of the Poly Pantry, whose leadership ensures the campaign aligns with current pantry operations and needs. In addition, the College of Agriculture's Media Team is actively supporting the creation of digital materials to amplify the campaign's message. Together, these collaborators contribute to a unified effort to promote nutrition literacy and expand access to healthier food choices for all students, especially those from underserved communities.

Relation to Afrofuturism

This initiative reflects Afrofuturist principles by reimagining a healthier, more equitable future for Black and underserved students through community-designed systems that merge cultural insight, scientific data, and innovation. Rather than relying on top-down dietary mandates, *Lighting the Way* empowers students to envision and demand a food system that values access, autonomy, and health equity. It speaks to a future where Black and Brown students are not just recipients of nutrition support, but co-creators of it.